

HOUSE RESOLUTION 164

By Favors

A RESOLUTION to honor Judge Walter F. Williams on the occasion of his retirement.

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of this legislative body should honor those jurists who devoted their careers to the pursuit of justice and reducing recidivism; and

WHEREAS, Judge Walter F. Williams is one such outstanding jurist, former Judge of Chattanooga City Court and attorney-at-law, who retired from private practice in August 2015; and

WHEREAS, a native of Chattanooga, Judge Williams achieved his lifelong dream of becoming a judge in March 1991, when in his first political race, he won election as Judge of the Chattanooga City Court for an eight-year term; and

WHEREAS, his judicial style, no-nonsense approach, and unusual alternative sentences gained him national attention, along with numerous awards and honors; Judge Williams was featured on the initial segment of CBS's *Street Stories*, and he appeared on CNN, *The 700 Club*, and in *Jet*, *Newsweek*, *Reader's Digest*, and *Southern Living*; and

WHEREAS, Judge Williams firmly believes that "education is the key to success," and with his guidance, more than 893 defendants obtained their General Equivalency Diplomas during his tenure on the bench; he was also instrumental in directing more than 300 students to further their education at Chattanooga State Technical College and the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, among other schools; and

WHEREAS, during a two-year period, Judge Williams reduced the number of repeat offenders in his court by fifty percent, assisted a number of persons in obtaining employment, and directed several persons off of welfare into self-supporting jobs; and

WHEREAS, Judge Williams's modernization and hard work increased excess revenues above expenses from \$500,000 in 1991 to more than \$1.3 million in 1999; and

WHEREAS, Judge Williams created the first Environmental Court docket in Chattanooga to assist in cleaning up the City; in less than two years, the City boasted an increase in compliance with code regulations from thirty percent to eighty-six percent as a result of Judge Williams's strong and deliberate actions in hearing such docket; and

WHEREAS, Judge Williams was honored with the Whitney M. Young, Jr. Award for his "rare but effective form of social justice during his tenure as City Judge"; and

WHEREAS, in March 1999, Judge Williams was re-elected to a second eight-year term by the voters of Chattanooga; he captured seventy percent of the vote and turned back challenges from two lawyers who sought to unseat him through negative campaigning, in which Judge Williams wisely refused to participate; and

WHEREAS, Judge Williams continued to positively influence the lives of those appearing before his court until his retirement on May 2, 2003, adhering strictly to his motto: "If I can help somebody as I pass along, then my living shall not be in vain"; and

WHEREAS, Judge Williams is a Magna Cum Laude graduate of Morehouse College, where he received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science and Business and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa for outstanding academic performance; he was awarded the Juris Doctor Degree from Howard University School of Law, where he graduated with honors and was an Earl Warren Fellow; and

WHEREAS, Judge Williams practiced law with the Regional Counsels Office of the Internal Revenue Service, prior to entering the private practice of law; in 1980, he became a partner in the law firm of McClarty & Williams in Chattanooga, for which he primarily handled personal injury, corporate, estate, and municipal law cases; he also taught for eight years as a full-time assistant professor of Marketing & Business Law at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga while maintaining a full-time law practice; and

WHEREAS, after serving on the bench for twelve years and eighteen years of total service with the City of Chattanooga, he left the public sector to engage in the practice of law as a senior partner in the firm of McKoon, Williams & Atchley until his retirement in August 2015; and

WHEREAS, active in numerous community organizations, Judge Williams has served on the boards of Valley Capital Corporation, The Ronald McDonald House, Friendship Haven Home For the Elderly, and the Baylor School Parents Council; he served as chairman of the board of the Westside Community Development Corporation to revitalize his old childhood neighborhood and as chairman and member of the board of trustees of the Hamilton County Governmental Law Library; and

WHEREAS, he is a Life and Thousandaire Member of the Morehouse College National Alumni Association; and

WHEREAS, strong in his religious convictions, Judge Williams is a deacon at First Baptist Church (East Eighth Street) and has served on the board of St. Barnabas Nursing Home and Retirement Apartments and its capital campaign and strategic planning committees; and

WHEREAS, he retired as chairman of the Scholarship Committee of the 100 Black Men of Chattanooga after eleven years of service and raising more than \$250,000 in scholarship awards; and

WHEREAS, Judge Williams is fortunate to share love and companionship with his wife, the former Gwendolyn McIntosh, who serves as an assistant professor in the College of Education at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga; and their daughters, Hillary Antoinette and Heather Marie; and

WHEREAS, throughout his estimable career, Judge Williams demonstrated the utmost professionalism, ability, and integrity, winning the unbridled respect and admiration of members of the bench and the bar alike; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we honor, commend, and congratulate Judge Walter F. Williams on his exemplary tenure as Judge of Chattanooga City Court and his distinguished career as a practicing attorney, applaud his commitment to

justice under the law and in society, and extend our best wishes for his every future success and happiness.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.